

Plain Talk Principle ~ Words

Definitions for the Most Common Misused Words

A lot vs. Allot vs. Alot A lot = many or much

Allot = verb meaning “to allocate” or “to assign”

Alot = don’t use

A while vs. Awhile

A while = a short time

Awhile = “for a short time” adverb

Accept vs. Except

Accept = to receive with consent or to give approval

Except = to exclude or to leave out a number or whole

Affect vs. Effect

Affect = “to influence”

Effect = “to bring about or cause to happen” or “to create”

All ready vs. Already

All ready = “prepared” adjective

Already = “by” or “before this time” adverb

All right vs. alright

All right = “satisfactory” or “agreeable” adjective

Alright = don’t use

All together vs. Altogether (state guidance)

All together = “wholly as a group” or “counted or summed up” adverb + adverb

Altogether = “entirely or completely” or “in all” or “on the whole” adverb

All ways vs. Always (state guidance)

All ways = “by all methods” adjective + noun

Always = “at all times” or “continually” adverb

Among vs. Between

Two is **between**, three or more is **among**

Amount vs. Number

Use **amount** for money or things that cannot be counted

Use **number** for things you can count.

And/or

Avoid using **and/or** instead use **either**, **both**, or **or**

Any one vs. Anyone (state guidance)

Any one = “any one person or thing in a group” and is always followed by the word “of” adjective + pronoun

Anyone = “any person at all” Pronoun

Any time vs. Anytime (state guidance)

Any time = “an unspecified point in time” or “an unspecified amount of time” adjective + noun

Anytime = “at any time whatsoever” or “whenever” adverb

Any way vs. Anyway vs. Anyways

Any way = “any method” adjective

Anyway = “in any case” adverb

Anyways = don’t use

Bad vs Badly (state guidance)

Bad = Adjective that follows a passive linking verb such as *is, was, feel, look, smell, taste, appear, become*

Badly = adverb used with action verbs

Beside vs. Besides

Beside = “by the side of” preposition

Besides = “in addition to” preposition

Credible vs. Creditable

Credible = “believable”

Creditable = “reputable”

Continual vs. Continuous

A **continual** process may have planned breaks; a **continuous** one does not.

Convince vs. Persuade (state guidance)

Convince = "to bring a person to your point of view" verb (should be used most)

Persuade = "to induce a person to do something" verb

Disinterested vs. Uninterested

Disinterested = "unbiased or free from selfish motive"

Uninterested = "not interested" or "not concerned"

Ensure vs. Insure vs. Assure

Ensure "to make certain"

Insure = "to protect against a loss"

Assure = "to give someone confidence"

Every day vs. Everyday (state guidance)

Every day = "each day" Adjective + noun

Everyday = "ordinary" adjective + noun

Every one vs. Everyone (state guidance)

Every one = "each person" or "each thing in a group" (each) Adjective + pronoun

Everyone = "all people in a group" (all) pronoun

Feasible vs. Possible (municipal guidance)

Feasible = "capable of being done or carried out" adjective

Possible = "being within the limits of realization" adjective

Farther vs. Further

Farther = speaking in terms of distance

Further = extent or degree

Fewer vs. Less (state guidance)

Fewer = Adjective used with items that can be counted and with plural nouns

Less = Adjective used with mass items that cannot be counted and are singular e.g., less than half

Good vs. Well

Good = "of favorable quality" in describing a noun or pronoun or feeling adjective

Well = "properly" skillfully" in describing an action. Adverb: "fit, healthy" in describing a person's health - how someone looks adjective

In vs. Into

In signifies a place

Into signifies an action

Regardless vs. Regardless of vs. Irregardless (state and municipal guidance)

Regardless = "despite everything" adverb

Regardless of = "without taking into account" or "in spite of" preposition

Irregardless = don't use

Percent vs. Per cent (state guidance)

Percent is always spelled out as one word.

Practicable vs. Practical (state guidance)

Practicable = Adjective that describes an idea or plan that in theory seems to be feasible or usable and is capable of being put into practice

Practical = Adjective that describes an idea or plan that IS feasible or usable because it has been successfully tried or proven by past experience and is fit for actual practice.

Real vs. Really

Real = "actual" or "true" adjective

Really = "very" or "certainly" adverb (Try not to use)

Several

Several = 3 or more

Some time vs. Sometime vs. Sometimes
(state guidance)

Some time = “a period of time” adjective

Sometime = “an indefinite time “ or
“anytime” adverb

Sometimes = “occasionally” adverb

Staff vs. The Staff or Staff Members (state
guidance)

Staff never stands alone in Washington

State correspondence

Use “**the staff**” or “**staff members**” in
Washington State correspondence.

Statewide vs. State-wide or Agencywide
vs. Agency-wide (state guidance)

Statewide and **Agencywide** are always
spelled out as one word, not hyphenated, in
Washington State Correspondence.

Than vs. Then

Than = conjunction used to show
comparison

Then = “at that time” adverb

Toward vs. Towards

Toward = “in the direction of” preposition

Towards = don’t use it.